

MAGNUM TOKYO! and SHIMA NOBUNAGA! rip it up in Grupo Revolucion! OZ ACADEMY! busts up MEIKO SATOMURA! and SONOKO KATO! TAJIRI! and MINORU TANAKA! go for the gold in Big Japan! and other stuff!

ALOHA~!

WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #74!

This is gonna be a lil fella because we all have sundry excuses as to why we couldn't write a whole bunch lately- Rev with jury duty, Schneider visiting his JUGGERNAUT BRIDGE-MASTER parents in Californie (they tell CHARLES GOREN TO GO TO HELL!!!!!!), and me being a big all-around load- all sandwiched between our fabulous summer fun (including my weekly cookout Bonanzas here in the capital), so this is a what we came up with. LOVE IT! The benevolent Love-Machine Glenn supplied the GAEA and MP Lucha and Schneider came up with the Big Japan. WHIP ASS! But first a word from the chubbsta...

!@!@!@!@!@!@ MICHINOKU PRO LUCHA SPECIAL- 4/11/98
-Dean Rasm.

Gran Hamada vs Tiger Mask IV:

There is so much Love fucking up Michinoku Pro these days in these post-Kaientai Deluxe, pre-Takeshi Ono- Orihara MP Lucha Specials, in that these kinda respect matches are really just filler to get you to the actual offbeat Lucha that these BRILLIANT specials have been supplying. And the Grupo Revolucion on this momma IS, quite simply, TRES SWANK. This is well wrestled and stuff, I guess, but El Gran Hamada is REALLY great when it's all heated up and he has a Dick Togo to play off of and unfortunately MP during this period is so NOT heated. I've never been the biggest fan of TMIV- since he was always the ninth or tenth best wrestler in the promotion, but there are lots worse I guess. This is kinda listless in spots, with random selling throughout by both- though the finish is pretty cool- with Hamada hitting a neato 3/4 Nelson Suplex off the top into a Cross Arm-breaker. Other than that....La dee dooooo... hmm... la dee dah dee dooo..... hmmm... GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR! GOOD GOD! When does Takeshi Ono show up to beat the crap out of this TM4 powdered assed pansy! Oops sorry... I'm gonna be stoked a whole bunch for a long time I get the feeling, but that hasn't made it to tape yet.

Men's Teioh/ Super Delfin vs Funaki/ Shinzaki:

Hmmmm....still WAY too much love but WAY better. It starts off great with Men's TEIOH wearing his macking furcoat and staring with an intense grimace before entering the ring, just like Misawa. This gets really great by the time its over just because Funaki is becoming the best wrestler of the bunch these days and he and TEIOH go at it hard and fast. They have this one really particularly gorgeous section where they do all this bizarro lucha-cum-puroresu matwork that had me all baffled and amazed. Sometimes I forget how cool Delfin is until he whips out the suplexes like he did this baby- including the super BOSS German-rolling-into-a-Dragon suplex which was just totally choice. I still don't buy his shotay though. Shinzaki only sucked for part of this match- doing a farkin nerve hold at one point, and was actually kinda compelling at the end

as it seemed that he picked up on how to build to a super hot finish while in with Taue and Kawada- tearing up TEIOH's knee in new and creative ways. Post-match they have the long heartfelt farewells to Funaki and TEIOH with Funaki actually breaking down. Welcome to the absolute end of a super-cool era.

Saito/ Dragon Kid/ Shinobi/ Tony Rivera/ Magnum Tokyo vs Dr. Cerebro/ Arkangel de la Muerte/ Sumo Fuji/ Judo Suwa/ Shima Nobunaga:

TO HELL WITH IT. It's official. The young punks of Grupo Revolution are just absolutely NUMBER ONE AND THE BEST. This match is REALLY, REALLY, REALLY long- like forty minutes or something and by the end I wanted it to keep going, and this is with a majority of workers who have less than one year's experience. When was the last time rookies kept anyone THIS enthralled? Heck, only Arkangel is old enough to even remember the words to WHIP IT by Devo. The stars of this tour-de-force were Magnum Tokyo as the high-flying face, Shima Nobunaga- the high-flying rudo, and Judo Suwa- the next mega-cool classic rudo it's looking like. Dr. Cerebro wore the TRULY odd mask with the fluorescent GREEN brain on top. And I thought the pink brain exposed was freaked-out enough. Dr. Cerebro is just the absolute MASTER of lucha weirdness- the aforementioned mask, the El Santo-esque ring manner, the super SCIENTIFIC method of going into each holds, and, of course, the lucha submissions that had Halloween on the phone with Mr Niebla going, "Niebla! MAN! This guy is killing us in the idiotically great improbable-submission department! His finisher is even goofier than Black Warriors! I'm NOT KIDDING!" Needless to say, you REALLY need to see Cerebro's finisher in this match to even begin to comprehend the mind-blowingness of it all. I fell to the ground and wept like a baby at the gradeur and innate beauty of it all. Magnum Tokyo is the master of this baby though as he and Shima Nobunaga tear it up, setting up the fabulous highspot train- where Saito (who is very cool also though he blows two big spots and dresses WAAAAY too much like Hanzo Nakajima) starts by killing Tony River (who is REALLY coming along quite nicely- but, of course, he was basically paired up with Arkangel who is one of the best rudos in all of Lucha Libre right now and all, but still...) who is then killed by Dr. Cerebro's Old School tope, who is then killed by Shinobi (who is SO NOT as cool as ORIENTAL but who is also grouped with Arkangel for lots of the match so he is kept under control) who is then killed by Sumo Fuji (who is becoming a good rudo- shaping his career as a Emilio Charles-in-training which is a good way to go.) and is joined by Shima Nobunaga in topeville and they top it off with Magnum Tokyo's SWAANNNNNNKKKKK toprope Asai Moonsault. Dragon Kid seperates his shoulder it looks like after exactly one move and I'm guessing that he was booked to be paired up with Judo Suwa so Judo Suwa gets to go at it with Magnum Tokyo as it breaks down to Suwa, Fuji and Nobunaga making like Grupoentai Deluxe and beating the living hell out of Magnum. Suwa sells Magnum's stuff like a young Jerry Estrada and makes Magnum look totally god-like. Suwa was the most VASTLY improved on this episode of the belove MP Lucha. He is definatley on the Black Warrior-young-great-insane-but-rock solid-rudo track. And then they just wrestle forever and you dig all of it. I loved this.

Shiryu/ Tsubasa/ Ultimo Dragon vs Scorpio Jr./ Dr. Wagner Jr./ Bestia Salvaje:

HEY! Ultimo Dragon, Shiryu and the wildly resurgent Dr. Wagner Jr are three of the best wrestlers going today and even they can't overcome the amazing crappiness of Scorpio Jr, the

incredible decrepitude of Bestia and the amazing greenness of Tsubasa. Ultimo and Dr Wagner have a few good moments- especially the super-cool WagnerDriver that Doc pulls off and Shiryu and Bestia have a neat brawling moment but this is very right in the middle of all the wrestling I've seen this year so far. But you should definately get this tape for the two tres cool matches and actually you can watch the other two and not throw up on your shoes or anything. Yep.

@#@@#@#@#@#@# GAEA- G-PANIC! SPECIAL 4/18/98
by REVEREND RAY

This week we're joined by the 'bitches in training', Sugar Sato and Chikayo Nagashima, the trainees at the Oz Academy, are on the panel. The show I think are taped on 3-15-98. They show that Akira is implanted with the demon seed, er...is pregnant and pretty much announces her retirement. Note, this might seem like the end, but as we all know, nothing is final in wrestling.

Nagashima v. Sonoko Kato [jip] :

Chikayo is in control as we join the action, but Kato gets control with some kicks and then hits her Thesz press into a cross arm breaker. They exchange elbows- with Chikayo selling each hit she threw as she was using her bad arm. Chikayo gets in a Fujiwara armbar and refuses to break when Kato hits the ropes. Kato gets kick intensive on her, tries to set up for something from a fireman's carry Chikayo hits a nice top rope drop kick, misses her first double stomp attempt and hits some more drop kicks to set it up. It gets a bit sloppy with some flubbed and nearly flubbed moves, Kato hits a top rope double stomp on Chikayo. She sets for the Dragon suplex, Chikayo tries to do the roll through package, but either bangs her head by accident or Kato countering her counter causes her to hit the mat. She kicks out at 2. Chikayo keeps in control for the most parts and takes out Kato after a few German Suplexes. Pretty cool, albeit sloppy in parts.

Sugar Sato v. Meiko Satomura:

Sugar controls a bit early on. The annoucers do mention the WCW Cruiser title which I believe Sugar currently holds. Meiko gets in control and seems to be setting up her submission holds, she of the getting an armbar submission while in the torture rack fame. However, she seems to not be going after one body part, proving she has no Anderson blood in her (that and the lack of a receding hairline.) Meiko tries to go up top, Sugar tries to stop her and gets knocked away, but instead of getting knocked down, Sugar just walks out of harm's way. Meiko goes for her Windmillin' Elbow but eats a boot. It's back and forth for a bit. Sugar hits a Hot Stun Gun Shot which has Meiko hitting the top and middle ropes. Sugar hits a top rope drop kick to the top of Meiko's head. There's a lot of back and forth stuff. Meiko avoids a few Uraken attempts by Sugar, goes for a frog splash and eats Sugar's knees. Meiko goes for the DVD, it gets blocked, she hits a high roundhouse kick, but Sugar answers with an Uraken. They're both down, Meiko works over the arm, rope save. Meiko goes for the DVD again, Sugar hits 2 Urakens and then hits the Lyger Bomb for the win. Pretty good. My only problem with it is that for the most part,

the Oz Academy's Uraken just aren't all that brutal. Maybe it's just me, but they really pale in comparison to the Aja level jaw displacement Uraken.

Mayumi Ozaki/Chikayo Nagashima v. Chigusa Nagayo/ Numao :

The dorm mother of GAEA and partner offer the Oz Academy a handshake at the start, Oz slaps away Chigusa's hand and Granny Nagayo and partner go medieval on them. Chigusa and partner punt Oz around a bit. Oz hits the much larger Chigusa with a Half Nelson suplex. Oz girls do the Mita/Shimoda heel girls rope tie/boot to the head pose. Nagayo blocks a double team attempt by hitting a cross body on the Oz Academy. Chikayo hits a super cool second rope drop kick. Numao And Chikayo go back and forth until Chigusa comes in. Chikayo hits one rana, he goes for something in the corner, Nagayo holds on, powerbombs her and Numao hits a splash. Oz and Nagayo are tied up while the jr partners go at it. Sugar lends a hand on the outside to block a Chigusa running powerbomb attempt. Oz knocks down Numao with an uraken. In response. Nagayo kills Chikayo deader than dead with a powerbomb from hell. Sugar runs in to save her partner, giving Oz a chance to tag in. Oz hits an uraken and sets for a Lyger Bomb. Chigusa tries to leg lariat her to block it put Oz sees it coming and pulls up Numao and Chigusa nails her own partner. Sugar grabs Chigusa's leg. Oz dedicates the tequila sunrise to her and puts away her partner. Post match, Chigusa goes over Oz a bit, then checks on her partner. Yamada and KAORU are at ringside and they strike up a dialogue. Basically, both teams are set to be in the finals. Since Nagashima is basically being chalk outlined on the mat, they agree to let Sugar sub in the finals. Chigusa wants some more of Oz who does some more trash talking. Pretty cool. The constant outside interference sort of gets old, but I think the rule in Japan is that if you're a woman and you're at ringside, you're given free reign to run in on a match and do whatever without being dqed. In fact, it's your civic duty to do something.

KAORU/ Toshiyo Yamada v. Sugar Sato/ OZ:

This is the finals of the tag tournament. With the way things turned out, you would guess the original final was supposed to be OZ and Akira v. KAORU and Yamada. The storyline, for those of you not keeping score at home, is that KAORU and Yamada don't get along. The only thing they have in common is their hatred of Akira and Oz. My guess is this was supposed to be the pay off...or a point to raise it another level. Of course, then Kensuke Sasaki screwed it up by well... knocking his wife up. Nice goin' big guy. And I thought steroids made you impotent. In the opening, KAORU and Sugar attempt to mess up each other's faces a bit. Yamada comes in and lays into Sugar and goes after Oz. Sugar gets in a dragon screw and a cross knee scissors on Yamada. Oz tags in and it goes back and forth with the teams attempting double teams and partners making saves, including Sugar dragon screwing KAORU off the ropes as she was going for a top rope move. There's a lot of countering of each other's holds between KAORU and Sugar, Sugar converted one rana into a powerbomb and rolled through another, KAORU turned a neckbreaker attempt by Sugar into a DDT. Oz Academy tries for a double team, KAORU tries a springboard but flubs it. Oz saves Sugar by kicking the referee to break a count. Yamada gets in control and sets for the Reverse Gory Bomb, but Sugar makes the save. I realize I have a tendency to go really long in my reports. I'm trying to cut back on that. There's a lot of counter wrestling in this match. Between someone reversing someones moves, to double reversals, to partners making saves or blocking double team, the action is hot. Yamada

hits a Reverse Gory Bomb on Oz as KAORU holds onto Sugar, but Sugar makes the save. Yamada goes for another, Sugar hits her with one uraken to stun her and Oz puts her away with another. The bad girls celebrate and probably head off to the girls room to smoke some cigarettes. Pretty damn choice!

Clip of something with Hirota from last year.

Hey, Alien 4 opens in April in Japan! And I'm glad to see the Japanese are stuck with commercials for cheap American crap products. And they get NFL Europe.

Sakura Hirota v. Satomura:

Hirota rushes Meiko at the start, they get a bit of hair pulling in and Hirota hits one of her hip attacks which are sort of low level, hitting more in the chest/stomach than in the face like say Iceman King Parsons or Shiro Koshinaka. Meiko goes after Hirota's arm and hits her Windmillin' Elbow. Hirota answers with some hip attacks and goes after Meiko's arm, including what looked like her doing a hip check to Meiko's extended arm which had Meiko looking at her like "what the hell do you think you're doing?" There's a lot of back and forth, but Meiko is clearly the ass stomper of the two and some of Hirota's antics get Meiko pissed and she starts pounding on her. They do a nice segment where they tease and counter each other's major holds. Hirota goes for majistral/ambar set up hold, Meiko blocks it with a cradle of her own, tries to stand up into the DVD, Hirota rolls through into a victory roll then into her Majistral/ambar thingy... whew... get all that? Hirota hits one top rope hip attack, she goes for a second, Meiko gets on the ropes and hits flying arm scissors into the cross arm breaker. Hirota makes it to the ropes and fights off a few DVD attempts, but ultimately has her spine fused for her at the hands of Satomura. I'm digging Satomura. She's got some cool moves and she can bring on the stiffness. From what I've seen of Hirota, she's pretty ok. She's got some charisma and for some reason I can't have a problem with a girl who uses her butt as a weapon. Hey now!

Hirota v. Oz : [jip]

We join with Oz in control. She gleefully works over Hirota's arm and does other things such as bite Hirota's fingers and pull her hair, just to prove that she's the heel in the promotion. Ozaki toys with her a bit, until Hirota reverses a whip attempt into a short arm hip attack. Hirota gets on the offense, runs Oz through a few submission holds and the younger tries to prove she can be as bitchy as Ozaki while she's got Oz in a camel clutch. Hirota's offense ends when Oz basically starts not selling her elbows and dares her to hit her some more. They have a brief slapping contest, which Oz wins. Hirota knocks Oz out to the floor and goes for a plancha, but Oz walks away and works the crowd. Oz controls a bit more, she powerbombs Hirota and does the one foot on the chest cover then pulls her up before the 3. Oz misses the Piscois turn around somersault senton. Hirota hits 3 Urakens, which are a bit off since she hits Oz with her elbow. Hirota goes for her Majistral/Armbar thingy, Oz escapes, some more near stuff, but Oz finally puts the youngster away with the Lyger Bomb. Pretty cool. It was your typical veteran v. Rookie type match. Oz is all bitchy and toys with Hirota a lot, Hirota tries to be spunky and fights back, but you know Oz is just going to kill her at some point. While it was typical, it was still fun for

Oz's heel work. I'm sure I'd probably enjoy it more if I knew Japanese, but as I said in an earlier report. I'm lazy.

Sonoko Kato/Satomura v. Nagashima/Sugar Sato:

This is a title match, I have no idea what title though (ALL-ASIA ATHLETE TAG TITLE- your favorite Phatboy). The GAEA gals are the champs and those no goodnicks from the Oz Academy are after the titles. Oz Academy attack at the bell, driving the GAEA girls into a corner. Nagashima eats knees on a top rope splash attempt and gets to be punted around by both GAEA girls. Kato goes her Thesz Press to a cross arm breaker, the camera does a good angle of Nagashima fighting it and Kato pushing her boot across her face trying to get her arm fully extended in the hold. Oz Academy double team Meiko a bit until Nagashima misses a top rope double stomp, eats a missile kick from Kato into a reverse knee scissors by Satomura. The Oz Academy try to set up Kato for a double team, but Meiko runs in, vaults off her partner and drop kicks both of them. Sato keeps going for the Lyger bomb, but it keeps getting blocked. After a messed up segment, Kato catches Sato on the top rope and bulldogs her off. Nagashima gets a near fall with a double stomp. Kato kicks out of a Nagashima German suplex attempt, Nagashima rans out of a double team attempt. Oz team misses an assisted top rope somersault senton. There's a segment where everyone ends up accidentally hitting their partner and some near falls are exchanged. Nagashima goes for a springboard move, but Kato pulls her down into a Meiko cross arm breaker and then Kato does her best to pull the ropes further away from Nagashima so she can't rope break. Kato does a torture rank type hold, which she uses to pass Nagashima over to Meiko who DVDs her, Sato saves. Team GAEA goes for a double team, Sugar stops Kato from drop kicking Nagashima off of Meiko's shoulders. Nagashima slides off, goes for a German, Kato knocks away Sato, goes to drop kick Nagashima but hits Meiko who then falls victim to a fishermanbuster for the pin. A cool match. I like Kato and Satomura a bunch. Sato is growing on me and Nagashima is still a little green, but she has potential.

All and all, a cool 2 hours.

BIG JAPAN SUPER JUNIOR TOURNAMENT 2/3/98

-Dean Rasm.

Tajiri vs Naniwa:

I waited FOREVER to get my hands on this tourney because HEY! It's Big Japan so it would probably rule.... and suck. And it RULES! And sucks. But the ruling outweighs the patches of suck so I was tickled pink about this whole Big Japan Jr tourney. This match was a whole lot of nothing though past the display of Tajiri's far superior grasp of lucha over the highly unresurgent Naniwa. Tajiri drags the youngster all over the mat and does a dozen cool lucha submissions as Naniwa decides to bring nothing to the table. Eh..

Minoru Tanaka vs Minoru Fujita:

Scrawny BattleARTS boy, Minoru Tanaka, is farkin AWESOME. Minoru Fujita is the BJ Jr guy who looks a whole lot like All Japan's Shiga but Fujita is credible looking, less pasty and translucent, and is pretty cool on the mat and in the submissions clinches which is where he whips out his truly cool ankle lock face lock cradle submission- so this match freakin ruled despite being a fast furious four minutes, five seconds. Tanaka is fast as shit and flies into some cross-armbeakers from odd angles before hitting his big beginning of the end- the MEGABOSS Northern lights roll-over-into-cross-armbreaker. Fujita gets out of it and slaps on his aforementioned finisher after getting a in a flurry of highflying (it's SO BattleARTSIAN!) but Tanaka rolls out into an ankle lock and the best four minute match of the year is over. I dig both of these guys. WHIP ASS!

Yamakawa vs Masayoshi Motegi:

It's a law in Japan that "no wrestling organization within the boundaries of the Island of Japan or any of it's Commonwealths shall initiate ANY Junior Wrestling Tournament without the inclusion of Masayoshi Motegi jobbing to someone else of said proper weight class." It's RIGHT THERE in the Constitution! I SWEAR! So here ya go. This was pretty okay. Yamakawa is the best psychotic Death Match participant of his generation, but- as of late- he is pretty much exclusively in Big Japan's regular wrestling matches and he's very US pro-style- owing a great deal to Kendo Nagasaki training everybody in Big Japan, I'm guessing. Good little old-style match with Motegi hitting his old-guy piscado and Yamakawa taking it to the floor. They blow a few things and it's too clipped. Cool face-buster finisher.

Gedoh vs Honma:

Honma is in the Fujita ilk- small, fast, BattleArts-like. Gedoh is Gedoh- you take your chances. This is really clipped all to hell, but it looked like they were shooting for Gedo to do a whole US Pro-style thing during this tourney because Big Japan DOES have a really cool fascination with what's good in US wrestling when they aren't pile-driving each other through barbedwire scaffolds- so Honma adjusted to the style change by approximating Gedo's Memphis style leanings by- I love this- aping everything Mutoh does, which is pretty funny when you really think about it. And he does a good tope con hilo to throw us off the Mutoh trail. Gedo with the frog splash.

Tajiri vs Tanaka:

Tajiri schools Naniwa in Lucha Libre and then tries to school Tanaka in shootstyle- but Ikeda and Ono wrestle this Minoru guy daily so Tajiri ain't smokin him in this, the best match in the tourney. Tanaka actually dictates the pace as it has that cool BattleARTS pro style pace as they set-up submission holds but the holds aren't the end-all goal like in other more purist-laden promotions. Tajiri starts countering with pro-style spots and then goes all Lucha on his ass with some truly goofed-out submissions that shoot-boy wasn't prepared to sell, one would think. Tanaka keeps going back to Cross-armbreaker variations as Tajiri tries to throw him off with his wider array of styles and it makes for a neato match. Stiff, weird, cool, but WAAAAYYY too short at eight minutes. I really dig these two guys.

Yamakawa vs Gedo:

This was good when it stayed in the realm of a US Pro-style match as these two seem to revel in the style- slow build to a hot finish, wear down holds over highspots, psychology over flashiness, selling and stiffness and pressure holds- everything that these guys learned from watching Dick Murdoch and Bruiser Brodie way back when these two were young fans, but it breaks down as Yamakawa blows his cool, flashing back to his DeathMatch days, and does two of the LONGEST TO SET UP table spots this side of Sabu. And then this turns into everything you hate about ECW- all after working a pretty good old school pro-style match, thus sending this baby into the tank. You can't blame Gedo for this one. Gedo with the frogsplash.

Titani, Makoto, Saito, Kobayoshi vs Kawabata, Matsuzaki, Shadow W X, Shadow Winger: HEY! Remember earlier when I mentioned all that suck. Here you have it! Actually, some of these guys aren't horrible, but I can't tell who's who so I'm.... so.... very.... sorry.... Shadow W X is a cool name. Yep.

Gedo vs Tajiri:

This is a lot like the Yamakawa/Gedo match but Tajiri isn't as incredibly green and self-conscious so this stays the course and is a good match. Gedo controls early, doing a decent Ted Dibiase impersonation as he wears Tajiri down. Tajiri hits a really GORGEOUS Asai Moonsault to make the transition to offense. Tajiri then goes back to the regular motif of the match, not hitting anything that Ricky Steamboat wouldn't hit in a normal match with the exception of a superplex. The moves get more dangerous as they head to the finish as Gedo wears Tajiri down more after grabbing control after the superplex, as Gedo hits his frogsplash that Tajiri kicks out of. Gedo tries a toprope plancha to the floor but Tajiri hits the TRULY HELLISH dropkick to the stomach as Gedo gets in range. They lay around a while and then make it back to the ring where they do a really cool extended roll-up sequence which sets up Tajiri's Dragon Suplex for the belt (which was a very handsome accessory). This was good. Hell, for a recent Gedo match, this was a freakin masterpiece. I love Big Japan, so GET ALLLLL THIS.

NEXT WEEK: HOLY MOTHER OF FUDGE!! TAKESHA ONO/ DIASUKE IKEDA vs HOSHImotherfudginKAWA/MINORU TANAKA!!! In BATTLARTS! The super secret WCW HANDHELDS! YASURAOKA VS OHTANI! CHONO rules it against HASH! Plus Schneider will be back, as will REV and I WHIP ASS!

For the Amazing Reverend Ray and the vacationing (and also amazing) Phil Schneider, as ever, this is Dean Rasmussen- sweet loverman.

I'm just the waterboy. The action's not over here.
-Lou Reed.